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THE FIGHT TO MAKE NEW YORK CITY 'DRY' New Chief Is Undismayed by All-Pervading Wetness

Hailing From Kentucky, Fifth Man to Undertake Difficult Task Knows All About Moonshining and Finds Plenty of It Here as Well as Legion of Smugglers---Flood of Liquor Diverted From Legitimate Channels and General Disregard for Eighteenth Amendment---Predicts Situation Will Soon Get Down to Home Brew and Hip Pocket Proposition

THE following article gives the readers of THE NEW YORK on the Big Sandy River with the sickish- turned out, having been temporary ap-HERALD not only a vivid account of the liquor situation in New York city and State as seen by Ernest S. Langley, the new Chief Prohibition Supervising Agent for this district, but presents also a striking description of the man himself, a strong character in which decision and a fighting spirit go with many picturesque traits. That a man who was born in the moonshine region of Kentucky should be one to undertake the sponging up of New York may appear something in the nature of a paradox, but as a matter of fact Mr. Langley has spent years in such

That the new enforcement chief, the fifth in succession in the office, is fully aware of the difficulties that beset the path of dry agents in his district is apparent from his observations of conditions as they exist here and elsewhere in the country. These difficulties he enumerates in a forceful and sparkling manner, and says they only spur him to keener effort. He also makes some interesting predictions concerning changes pertaining to the liquor situation in New York.

RRRRRRLLLLLNNNNGGGG!! The telephone in the inner office of Room 801, 49 West Twenty-seventh street, breaks the quiet querulously, infor the instrument, claps his ear to the receiver and shoots out: "Well!"

Then one hears, after the man at the other end of the wire has said his piece.

"Hell, no! Pay no attention to lawyers. Don't listen to lies. Read what's written on your warrant and serve it out to the letter. I'll stand by you-if you are on the

Clip-clap, the receiver goes into its hook his tongue swings around to his visitor.

"Oh, you little old wet New York!" he soliloquizes. "Where in the name of the dry as the Mohave Desert-well, pretty nearly, anyway-but I'm blessed if I see how we can mop up this all pervading wetgives us. It's one hell of a job, I'll tell the world, including Russia."

Introducing Ernest S. Langley, Chief Dry Agent in New York State

Suspecting that it's about time to introduce this gentleman of speech so direct, I Langley man. Possibly just possibly, you sion. At all events be's worth a glance or

Some men and most women suggest color tones. Langley is brown. His face is tanned almost to a light coffee color by years of Government sleuthing out of Coors in all sorts of climates and weathers. He has the complexion of a sallor, of an adventurer. He looks like a two gun man. He would do for one of Bill Hart's stick-up dramas of the cinema, assistant helo or villain, either one. He is not a big man by any means, sizing up for what is often called "medium baild." That is to say, he is about 5 feet 9 inches tall, well muscled though not conspicuously so, weighs probably 160 pounds, and suggests competency to handle himself creditably in a scrap. His light brown hair is thinning a bit at the age of 45, though he has enough left to cover the top of his pate. His dark brown eyes are sufficiently wide apart to tavite confidence. His forehead is high. His nose turns up a little at the tip and his rather wide mouth has rather thin lips. His jaw is prominently modelled and he has a good. firm chin. Altogether the chief enforcement officer resembles a man of decision just as be looks like a fighter.

Langley's Retreat Always Is Safe From Invasion

The office is astonishingly bare. Except for the flat topped desk at which Langley and his chief assistant Ray Conley, sit. there is little more than a spare chair in the whole big room. The desk is exactly in the centre of the emerald green carpet There are two entrances to Langley's retreat and the spring lock is kept on both doors. Langley is as accessible as a bank president, no more so.

There are seven good reasons why he de-

sires to know in advance exactly who is coming in to call. There are two doors because it is often advisable for a visitor to leave without being seen by persons that

have entered the anteroom since his artival. sistently. The man at the big flat topped Moreover, Langley's agents find a private desk shifts a cigar from the southwest to door at the back of the room a handy thing. the northeast corner of his mouth, reaches They are constantly slipping through it to whisper in the ear of their boss or to get his curt orders. They seem, by the way, to have a pretty thorough respect for the new chief, the fifth in the succession of those that have tried to dry up New York.

Recalling the Four Men Who Preceded Him in Office

The first, it will be recalled, was James J. Shevlin, who stayed on the job eight months before Washington decided to shift him to Texas. Then came Frank L. Boyd and the one syllable person with a burr on who quit last November after walling that it was a thankless and a hopeless task to try to make New York dry. The third in line was Knox Phagan whose tenure was quite short, however sweet, and then came Lord does the stuff all come from? Give Daniel L. Chapin, who, while with us briefly me about 500 honest, well paid booze sleuths enough, revealed himself to be a man of and I will guarantee to make the city as parts. For example, he had his whole flock of agents before him one day, more than 100 fellows who had been uncovering (or covering) law violations, and he made them all lay their two hands upon his desk top. ness with the little sponge that Uncle Sam Everybody that wore a diamond ring got the sack. No honest prohibition enforcement officer could afford to wear diamonds, said Dan Chapin. And now comes Langley, himself a character, and speaking with astonishing frankness about the formidable character of his task.

He comes from eastern Kentucky, as has brother John to Congress for many years- on this proposition," he says. been said; from the hill country where Re- the coming session will be his ninth- and what I'm up against and with what insuffihereby present Mr. Ernest S. Langley of publicans abound, where feuds are fought both of the Langleys are Republicans. Comof the U. S. A. Take a good look at the talns raise corn and cherish the conviction that the Government has no more right to the game laws. For a good Republican might want to see him first on some occa- tax corn liquor than it has to tax corn- reason, therefore, Brother Ernest expects bread; where womenfolk still ride to town to be made permanent chief enforcer in sitting back of their husbands upon the this State, his predecessors, except Shevfamily mule. Ernest S, Langley was born lin, who was not very permanent as it

always be some booze sloshing around."

all his life he has been trailing the stuff. ground up," he says.

sweet smell of moonshine in his nose, and pointees, fillers in. Langley wants to stick even though he realizes that he has about "I certainly know whiskey from the the meanest job of anybody in the United States.

Langley in his inner office at 49 West Twenty-seventh street, is about as accessible as a bank president, except possibly by telephone. He gets many a tip over the wire.

Eastern Kentucky has been sending his

Langley's Highlights on the Liquor Situation

"M blessed if I see how we can mop up this all pervading wetness with the little sponge that Uncle Sam gives us. It's one hell of a job, I'll tell the world, including Russia. . . . I know what I'm up against, but that sort of spurs a man to do his keenest."

"One can buy a very classy still for about \$40, copper and everything. It might amaze the community if we could get a look at all the good people who are moonshining thus in utter contempt of the law of their country."

in New York city will get down to a home brew and hip pocket proposition. don't believe New York can ever be made dry in the literal sense. There w

"There are probably 40,000,000 gallons of whiskey in the country, and I am dead sure there is enough of the stuff hidden in barns and cellars around New York to run the city for at least two years. All this stuff is aside from the liquor now in bonded warehouses under Uncle Sam's lock and key."

and proprietary medicines, so they say, or so their books show; and locating a needle in a haystack is a cinch compared to tracing a barrel of alcohol in a drug

"Saloon keepers sell nowadays only to people they know and can rely on not to give evidence against them. There seems to be a very numerous class

force enforcement agents, means the finish of the corner gin mill. I don't see how the saloons can buck the game."

I believe there would be less disposition for men to go wrong and that a better class of men would be drawn into the service."

prohibition law has furnished a way for lots of people to pay off old scores, it would seem, and Uncle Sam is the gainer thereby."

"There were 39,000,000 gallons of grain alcohol released in 1920 for patent medicines, hair tonics and such—three times as much as ever before."

"Liquor is so expensive and so bad in most places where it is accessible at all that few buy except men confirmed in their addiction and with the price."

"It's going to take a long time, maybe a whole generation, for public opinion in New York to change as regards the prohibition law. But we of the enforcement agencies will just have to rack along doing the best we can."

I find one of them betraying me he will know something has hit him.

"It is my opinion that the new State enforcement law, making the police

"I have watched my men pretty closely. I believe they are square men. If

"Enforcement agents get about \$1,700 a year. They should have \$3,000.

"An immense amount of information comes to us from informers. The

"Eventually, in my judgment, say in about three years, the liquor problem

"Enough whiskey comes through from Canada to float the United States Navy. In a stretch of twenty-two counties in this State we have only eighteen men to keep an eye on 114 gateways through which booze can ooze from Canada."

"Druggists are making under permit an enormous amount of toilet articles

clent tools, but that sort of spurs a man to eastern Kentucky, Chief Prohibition Super- out through thinning generations; where ing from their part of the country they do his keenest. I'm no stranger to New vising Agent for the State of New York, moonshine whiskey has been made for a could be scarcely anything eise, for Demo-York, you know, as six years of my thirwhich means to many folk the Chief Gloom century and a quarter and will continue to crats in the mountains of east Kentucky teen in the United States Revenue Service be made as long as the men of the moun- have almost no social standing and are have been spent here in this city, and I Sizing up the whole enforcement situation. there are a few factors that stand out, in my estimation.

"In the first place, take the matter of public opinion. It is pretty obvious that public opinion in this city is indifferent to enforcement if not actually hostile. Apparently a large part of the population chuckle with pleasure when they see prohibition made farcical. Another large part deliberately violates the law, although they are men and women of character and would ingly. Whatever public sentiment may be elsewhere in the country it is unfriendly to prohibition in this and several other big

"Look at the manifestations of evnical disobedience to the Constitution and the law of Congress. I have reason to believe that at many public banquets this year dinners attended by men of large prominence, wealth and respectability, bankers, college men, professional men, there was more booze consumed than at dinners in the wet era. These gentlemen, all pillars of respectability, brought their own liquor on the hip,' as the phrase has it, carrying counties in this State we have only eighteen their stimulant in pocket flasks and drinking more straight whiskey therefore than they ever consumed in the old days. have been told by credible persons that little progress is made stopping the smugthere has been much actual public drunkenness at these dinners. All these men who violate the law in that way know perfectly well what they are doing. They g, to lengths in a spirit of brayado, I think but it all traces back to their distaste for the prohibition law.

vate still. How many men do you know that are making their own booze, either gling runs the entire length of the border, distilling hard liquor or brewing beer?" Langley asked.

the way, is a very prominent banker. Anbe surprised to hear of a preacher.

in this city, many thousands, in the private Panama, Mexico, Cuba, the Bahamas and

'He looks like a two gun man. He would do for one of Bill Hart's stickup dramas of the cinema, assistant hero or villain, either one."-From the interviewer's description.



ERNEST S. LANGLEY. Chief Prohibition Supervising Agent for New York State.

very classy still for about \$40, copper and contributes to our troubles. everything. It might amoze the community tempt of the law of their country. And it enter a private residence we must first supply evidence that the law is being vio ated. We must prove that a still is 'n operation or that beer is being brewed. And yet it is ordinarily. A wholesale dealer goes to the virtually impossible to get evidence without State Prohibition Director, Charles R. getting into the house. We get nowhere in O'Connor, and obtains a permit to with-

Thinks There Always Will Be

"Eventually, in my judgment, say in about three years, the liquor problem in New York city will get down to a nome his customers, and finally the ten barrels brew and hip pocket proposition. I don't are so divided and subdivided that it is believe New York can ever be made dry in a literal sense. There will always be some drawal. Somewhere along this devious booze sloshing around. Much of it will course of trade the liquor gets into the come from the private stills. It is easy to make and of good quality if let alone to about 30,000,000 gallons of whiskey withage. I don't see what we are going to do drawn, and the speculation is that the about the hip pockets. You can't go around greater part of it has been diverted to bevrapping every doubtful looking citizen upon erage purposes southern exposure."

the country and in this New York district.

"That's hard to say with any accuracy," Langley replied. "So much is concealed lation and conspiracy by crooked wholeand held out in hidy holes. There are prob-salers. There is where we work in coopcountry, and I am dead sure there is enough of the stuff hidden in barns and cellars around New York to run the city for at least two years. All this stuff is aside from the liquor now in bonded warehouses under Uncle Sam's lock and key. It represents millions of gallons that were withdrawn on forged permits. There was a period a few months ago when forged permits turned up dreds of individuals and dealers seized a chance to get goods out of bond and into a safe hiding place. That stuff keeps trickling steadily into the market and there's so much of it that the occasional seizures we are able to make have no perceptible effect. would take thousands of revenue agents instead of the few dozen we have to round up this liquor."

Smuggling Most Troublesome Factor in Liquor Situation

"How about the smuggling situation?" "Bad," said Langley. "That's the biggest. trouble of all. Enough whiskey comes through from Canada to float the United States Navy. In a stretch of twenty-two men' to keep an eye upon 114 gateways through which booze can ooze from Canada. That's abound of course. The result is that their tricks and devices are endless. They use fast motor cars with blinding head lights. They pack the stuff through the carrying five and ten gallon tins. They bring it over in canoes. Their strategems smuggled whiskey from Conada. Smug-

"I have mentioned three sources of sup-'A number," I said. "One of them by ply, the moonshine, home made liquor; the liquor that was withdrawn from bond by other is a well known lawyer. I wouldn't the millions of gallons on forged permits some months ago, and the liquor that is 'Nor would I," said Langley. "I haven't smuggled in from Cauada and to a small a doubt that thousands of stills are running extent from steamships returning 'rom

but we get our share at this end.

homes. These contrivances are being man- the Bermudas, as well as from European ufactured enormously and there is no doubt ports. This is relatively light, but a good that they have a wide sale. One can buy a deal does get in first and last, and it all

"The fourth means of supply for the If we could get a look at all the good people thirsty is the bonded whiskey released on who are moonshining thus in utter con-bona fide permits from Government wareisn't a thing we can get at. In order to permitted use in medicines and toilet articles to straight beverage purposes. A whole lot of whiskey goes astray in that way

"Here's the way the scheme is worked draw ten barrels of whiskey, declaring the whiskey is for non-beverage purposes, drugs and medicines. Then the wholesaler Some Booze Sloshing Around promptly sells to another wholesaler, who sells to a third, who does business with a fourth, who may split the lot in selling to sometimes impossible to identify the withhands of bootleggers.

"How much distilled liquor is there in Cooperates With State Agents Against Crooked Wholesalers

"Much of our enforcement work is obtaining evidence to show Volstend act vioably 40,000,000 gallons of whiskey in the eration with State Director O'Connor's depermits for withdrawals and there are six or seven different kinds of permits. These are importation and exportation, transportamit for sacramental purposes. It is our business to check up all along the line to see if the permits are honestly used. We follow after O'Connor's office. pect that a wholesaler is diverting whiskey to bootleggers we examine that man's books as the law gives us a right to do. We find when and to whom he sold the liquor withdrawn. Then we hop to the second set of books. Sometimes we have to go to five or the withdrawal was broken up and illecally diverted. If we can locate the actual diverter we put him out of business but

"Druggists are making under permit an enormous amount of tollet articles and proprietary medicines, so they say, or so their books show, and locating a needle in a haystack is a cinch compared to tracking a barrel of alcohol in a drug store. We investigate all classes of permits as closely as possible, even the sacramental variety. The Jews are the greatest withdrawers of wine under this class of permit, every rabbi being allowed ten gallons a year for every

"What's your opinion of enforcement as

family in his flock."

it touches the saloone?" "Not so good as it should be," Langley replied squarely, "There are lots of salcon keepers in New York that are selling beoze more or less openly. Some of them have een arrested-many, in fact. Some of them "Take the household situation—the pri- are endless. There is a fally traffic in this have been acquitted or have been the beneclaries of a disagreement. Public opinion operating again, you see. Almost all are variety of brand new tricks to protect them from raiders. In the first place, it is virtunlly impossible for a stranger to get a drink. I'll bank on that. I mean that you couldn't walk unaccompanied into a saloon you had never been in before and where,

Continued on Following Page